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WASHINGTON, D.C. 20505

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTORON-FILE NSC RELEASE INSTRUCTIONS
APPLY

22 September 1972

MEMORANDUM FOR: Major General Alexander M. Haig, Jr., USA
Deputy Assistant to the President
for National Security Affairs

SUBJECT : Unsolicited Advice on Mining

1. After our session on Tuesday, 19 September, I set several things quietly in train -- speaking separately and privately to certain knowledgeable colleagues so they could (unwittingly) contribute to a comprehensive endeavor without anyone save the Director and myself having the total pattern in mind. The fruits of these various individual labors will be passed along as soon as they are completed.

2. Part of my querying and task levying was prompted by the rather pedestrian belief that before essaying new ventures it might not be amiss to review actions already in train. To this end, I had a frank and private discussion of the current mining program with our best shipping expert. This gentleman [redacted] is a brilliant and doggedly thorough professional who has done you yeoman service for a long time. With all due respect to our colleagues in the Pentagon (both in and out of uniform), [redacted] knows as much about shipping into and out of North Vietnam as anyone in the U.S. Government. The blunt questions I put to him prompted a reply in the shape of an informal note intended for my eyes only. I attach it here -- unedited and unexpurgated -- for your private information.

ARMY, NAVY, JCS reviews
completed.

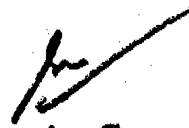
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3. I am sending this to you for obvious reasons. The Chiefs and the Navy would regard suggestions from Agency civilians on how to improve their mining program about as warmly as we would regard their suggestions on how to improve our covert collection operations. I think the points [redacted] raises need to be pursued, but their pursuit will be much more effective and generate far less counterproductive turbulence if it emanates from your office rather than mine.

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George A. Carver, Jr.
Special Assistant for Vietnamese Affairs

Attachment

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MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Thoughts on the North Vietnam Mining Program

1. The following are some thoughts vis-a-vis our conversation on 19 September. What follows reflects two basic assumptions: a) that the complete mining of the North Vietnamese coastline from the Sino-DRV border to the DMZ is impracticable and b) that the major corridor for seaborne infiltration of supplies is in the 60 mile area north of Cam Pha to the Sino-DRV border.

2. If assumption b is true then one obvious course of action is to seal off that area with an extensive mining program. As of this writing, it is my understanding that the existing mining package stops at Cam Pha. At one point I was told contingency plans exist for mining north of Cam Pha but would only be used if the need arose. I think it has; we know that the shallow-draft minesweepers and minesweeper related vessels almost certainly entered Haiphong that way and there are continuing indications of unidentified shallow-draft vessels in the area. These would have an even easier time of moving in these coastal waters because they probably pull no more than two or three feet.

3. As part of the mining package I would urge increased aerial and naval surveillance of the area -- both day and night. Our coverage of the area is very poor (perhaps two overflights a day -- both during daylight hours). I believe that the enemy, true to his nature, is moving his material at night. He can do it; he probably has experienced sea pilots who know these waters like the "back of their hands."

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4. I think we need a change in mine ordnance. The MK-36 destructors despite all that has been said about them, are "old hat" to the North Vietnamese. They have dealt with them in the past during Rolling Thunder and are apparently coping with them now. I don't know what the Navy has in its mining arsenal, but it has got to come up with something specifically designed for shallow-draft vessels, some of which probably are all wooden. That surely is a big order, but the extension of the mining package and more suitable mine ordnance seems to go hand in hand.

5. You notice I haven't mentioned Hon Nieu or Hon La, the southern ports that have been the scene of continuing enemy resupply efforts. I do this because I think we are doing as well as can be expected under existing conditions. Also -- and this is just a hypothesis -- what if the enemy is keeping our attention riveted on these two ports as the main entry points and in the meantime is using the back door.

6. In summary, therefore, I suggest zeroing in on the area north of Cam Pha all the way to the Sino-DRV border. Do this by a combined and upgraded mining, mine ordnance and surveillance package. If the Communists are doing most of their movements at night as I suspect, this means we should also blanket this area with modern electronic detection systems, including infra red devices.

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